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ABSTRACT

This study examines the expectations held by three generations of men and women toward women mixing careers with marriage and family. A questionnaire of 9 items was distributed to 46 women and 46 men from 19 years old to 72 years old who were undergraduate students or staff at the College of Saint Thomas (St. Paul, Minnesota) or the University of Minnesota (Minneapolis). Some of the findings show that: (1) younger women did not grow up expecting to be only a wife and mother; (2) the two older generations have not had their expectations of career, marriage, and family met; (3) the biggest differences occurred between genders of the youngest generation with the males more traditional in their attitudes; (4) advice currently given to the youngest generation appears to be genderless in its context; and (5) women from the middle generation reported highest expectations of career and family while also reporting not having their expectations met and not wanting children. The study concludes with suggestions for future research. A table showing the responses in percentages and the questionnaires are included. (DJC)

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HAVING IT ALL:

A Comparison of the Expectations About Women and Careers Of Three Generations of American Men and Women

By

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and

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Presented by

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at

Leadership and Power:
Women's Alliances for Social Change
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I. INTRODUCTION

This recent Doonesbury comic strip portrays the "ideal" contemporary American couple: they enjoy indepth discussions of each other's careers, have time for significant input into the upbringing of their children, and lustily enjoy sex with each other, while the fairies come in to do the cleaning and to hand-launder the children's designer clothing. Perhaps "ideal" and a goal once sought after by those on the leading edge of change for women, this couple is still non-existent. But is it even still a goal sought-after by the current generation of women about to enter the work force? And, how do their male peers view that goal?

This study represents a start towards answering the question: what <u>are</u> the expectations of each of three generations of women and men towards women mixing careers with marriage and family? This is an important question because as more and more women have moved into the work place, it has been assumed that values and expectations about women's careers might also have changed; yet, with the leveling off of the interest in the women's movement, few if any attempts have been made to chart and/or track any such changes.

In the following paper, the methodology will be described first, followed by the numerical findings coupled with relevant research, where available, from other sources. The paper will end with a summary and conclusions along with implications and suggestions for future research.

II. METHODOLOGY

The methodology utilized in this study was a written questionnaire, followed by discussion with the respondent whenever possible. A pilot study of ten participants was completed, after which the questionnaire was revised to reflect changes and to add questions. (These ten were included in the final group even though they had not had an opportunity to answer all the questions.) A copy of the revised and final questionnaire is enclosed as Appendix A.

The questions were numerically tabulated and percentages figured for each category of answers. In addition, content analysis was completed on the accompanying narratives.

The source of the sample was undergraduate and graduate students at the College of St. Thomas and the University of Minnesota, staff at the College of St. Thomas, and various clients of both researchers. Participation was voluntary and anonymous.

The sample size was forty-six women (including the ten from the pilot study) and forty-six men. While the researchers make no suggestion that this is either a representative or random sample, it is a large enough group to identify possible trends which might be important for future research: it can serve as a pilot study for a larger survey. The age range was from nineteen-years-old to seventy-two years of age (one woman did not list her age). These were arbitrarily broken down into three generations as follows:

	Women	Men

Less than 26 years N=14 18

26 to 35 years N=14 18

36 and over N=17 10

Age unknown N=1

Other demographics are as follows:

Income-

Most women reported income under $21,000; two over $50,000. Most men reported in the $31-50,000 category; one over $50,000.

Marital Status -

For both, approximately half were married, half single or divorced.

Other -

For both genders, most of the younger generation reported their mother had a "career"; about half did for the middle generation; most of the older generation reported their mothers did not have a "career" outside the home.

For both groups almost all reported at least some education beyond high school. Income, marital status, education and occupation are not considered to be significant factors in this study.

III. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Many studies were conducted in the seventies about women's work, changing careers, and new expectations about relationships. It was expected that the eighties would reflect a significantly different picture than the sixties: "The

crucial changes, however, will come about (if indeed they do) because we rear a new generation with different values; because the cracks that appeared in the sixties will become the crevices of the eighties" (Chafetz, p. 220). However, what little research has been conducted in the eighties suggests that little has changed. Business Week at the end of 1984 recognizes that there has been some "turnabouts, (but) women managers are occasionally jolted by evidence that time does not necessarily solve all problems in the socialization of men and women" (p. 127). Dubno in his 1985 longitudinal study about attitudes toward women executives concludes that "women have continued to experience difficulties making gains in salary and position in organizations...negative attitudes still exist about women and the part they play in our society" (p. 235). Given that the research suggests that, unlike the expectations generated in the late sixties and early seventies, little has changed in attitudes towards women and what women have accomplished, this study asked questions about what the expectations were and are. In an attempt to identify changes, if any, in those attitudes and expectations, as noted above, a questionnaire was utilized.

The numerical responses to the questions are tabulated and presented as Table One. The first significant finding is represented by question one: not even one person in the youngest generation of females reported the expectation that they would "be" a mother/wife when they grew up: they were almost evenly divided between either a career, or both a career and marriage/family. Question one clearly shows a trend across the three generations of women away from expectations of being only a mother/wife, and towards having both a career and family or just a career. However, the males of each generation reported different expectations than women did; these differences are drastic

in the youngest generation where 50% of the men grew up thinking that girls would be only mothers/wives. The middle generation of both men and women differ markedly from the older and younger generations of the same gender.

In question two (which was asked only of the women), it is not surprising to find that 93% of the younger women reported that their expectations had been met: perhaps it is easy to say your expectations have been met when one is not married--but plans to--and has no children--but plans to--and has not yet, or has just, entered the job market! There is a significant difference, however, between what that generation reported and that reported by the previous two generations, who both overwhelmingly (86% and 82% respectively) reported their expectations had <u>not</u> been met. (It should be noted that the oldest generation included some whose expectations had been to be a mother/wife only, but for whatever reason are now also having a career.)

While question three is less relevant for the oldest generation of women (only two did not already have children: one said yes she plans to, one said she had no such plans), there is a significant difference between the younger and middle generations of women: 73% of the younger generation said they plan to have children, while 55% of the middle generation said they have no plans to have children. Of that younger generation, almost half said they expected to have children in about ten years. Again, there is a drastic difference between the men and the women: an average of 91.3% of the men say they expect to have children, but only 59% of the women 35 and under do. It raises the interesting question as to with whom these men expect to have children!

Question four reports the answers to the question of whether or not they feel their mother would do it the same way again if she had it to do over. Again there is a great difference between the three generations of women: fully 71% of the younger generation felt unequivocably that their mothers would do it all the same again, while 80% of the middle generation felt unequivocably no that their mothers would not do it the same, including comments such as "she wouldn't get married" or "she would have had a career first," "she would have had kids later." It is possible that this middle generation of women listened to their mothers! In both of the older two generations, a small percentage said "Yes, she would do it the same" but then added qualifications such as "but I don't think she felt that way until a few years ago. Up until then she wasn't very happy..." These could be seen as strengthening the "no" category rather than the "yes" category. Men on the other hand consistently say yes that their mothers would do it the same. It is possible that the mothers of the younger generation had more choices, and thus are more satisfied. Or, it is possible that young people are unaware of, and shielded from, reality until they too get married!

A content analysis was completed utilizing the responses from question five: the best advice given to the respondent about careers/marriage/family when growing up as a girl, and for men, the best advice they heard girls receiving. All three generations of women reported fairly high responses in the category described as "putting self first": this category was made up of responses such as "set your own priorities," "be an individual," "make up your mind what <u>you</u> want and then go for it," and, "you can do whatever you desire." Another category which received fairly high responses across all three generations is described as "career first/marriage later," and was

represented by such responses as "Go to college! Have a life of your own first. Don't worry about getting married; there are plenty of men out there! Why tie yourself down? You can always have your own family later," "wait on marriage," "you don't have to get married and have a family if you don't want to," "not pressure myself to get married around 25 years," "don't marry until you have an education and career," "children can wait," and, "there's more to marriage than having children." Two separate respondents in the middle generation reported having been told to never get married, and to never have children: one repeated that that was the best advice she'd ever been given. The men, however, showed great differences across the generations about the advice they heard girls receiving: the older two generations were about the same, about half having heard girls being told to get married and have children, and a little less than half being told that they should pursue their own interests and a career. However, the youngest generation of men reported the best advice as being the same as the women did. It is possible that the advice being given to boys and girls is becoming more alike, or that there is a change in the male perception of what the best advice is!

As mentioned, the advice given was consistent across the three generations. What varies across the three generations was <u>who</u> gave that advice: For the middle generation of women, the advice was overwhelmingly given by the mother, followed in a close second by the youngest generation (who reported others (outsiders) giving advice secondarily). Very few of the older generation reported being given their best advice by the mothers, however; this generation reported having been given most of their advice by their fathers, and secondarily by others such as outsiders (grandmother, grandfather, aunt, teacher). This reinforces what was found by Meier in his

study of the relationships between mothers and attitudes towards women: "the mother role is of considerable significance in shaping the sex role attitudes of today's youth...in the extent to which the mother predominates in the attitudinal socialization of the child, and the degree to which the mother exhibits attributes of social achievement in her own right" (p. 120). It appears the working mothers of the two younger generations do indeed have more clout--social status--than the non-working mothers of the oldest generation of both men and women! It appears that fathers lost ground significantly as advice giver to the younger two generations of women, and gained somewhat as perceived by the men in the middle generation only.

Content analysis was also applied to question six regarding the advice the respondents would give to a young girl about career/marriage/family. The significant finding here is that of the younger generation of women, 82% of the respondents reported they would give the same advice as they got, while only 21% and 27% respectively of the two older generations would give the same advice. None of the younger generation but 21% and 18% respectively of the older two generations reported that they would advise girls to put their career first (when it was not the advice they had been given). Two categories--being true to self, and don't marry early or at all--were fairly evenly utilized by all three generations. Caution against having children was not utilized at all by the younger generation, while the two older generations reported that 21% and 23% respectively. Only one woman reported that she would advise a young girl that she can "have it all": a forty-seven year-old married woman, whose mother did not have a career but who was currently working in the job she had envisioned while growing up, who felt her mother would do it the same, who herself has one grown-up child, also reported no burn-out in

marriage or career and who does not anticipate any change. She clearly represents the exception in this study on almost all factors! Men also highly favored the advice that young girls should put their own interests, education and career first, however, 20% of the oldest generation reported they would advise women to share home responsibilities with the men. Since many of the men in this category were either divorced or in second marriages, it is possible that this represents the voice of experience. The most--or perhaps least--surprising finding, however, was that the younger two generations of males reported that their recommendation for advice is that young girls must "choose what they wish to sacrifice." That is clearly the traditional male viewpoint but not reported by older men!

The men were asked what advice they had received as young boys. Not surprisingly, 100% of them reported receiving the traditional male advice of getting an education and career first so they could better support the wife and family. The interesting surprise here is the shift in who gives the advice: the oldest generation reported never having had their father as the principal advice-giver, while the younger two generations similarly reported the father as advice-giver more than 40% of the time. Fathers have gained ground as advice-giver to men, but lost as advice giver to the females.

To question seven regarding change (which was asked only of the women), virtually everyone in the middle generation who responded to this question has experienced or is actively planning a career change (N=5); in the older generation, 89% plan or have experienced change (N=8).

To question eight regarding burnout (also only asked of the women), 83% of the middle generation said yes to having experienced burnout in either marriage or career or both, responding with such comments as "...I realized in my previous job that because I was a woman, I wasn't going to be promoted to manager: they brought in a man who had no experience and I had to train him in...," "...a plateau in marriage where it's not exciting or passionate anymore, just comfortable and trusting..." "...burnout in job when unable to advance within a male dominated environment...," "marriage wasn't meant to be but we worked hard at it...," "I get burnt out when I try to live up to someone else's priorities...," "unless you really WORK at it, marriage can be destroyed..." "I'm awfully sick of laundry and making school lunches, I do both with lots of verbal complaining...," "something had to give: my marriage did. Then I burned out and had to change careers too."

In response to the capstone question nine, "is it possible to have it all?" the younger generation of women led in unequivocable yes responses with 23% but perhaps is becoming more pragmatic: that generation added 46% of "yes buts." The lowest number of yes responses came from the middle generation. The older generation led in saying no with 50% saying an unequivocable no, and another 28% saying "yes, but" and then adding qualifications, such as a husband who helps with the kids, or a large amount of money to hire help, because "no matter how you try to juggle it, something always suffers, and that is very frustrating."

It was on this last question that there was the most agreement between men and women in the older generation (due to experience?), and the most disagreement between the youngest generation. The younger women said yes

and yes but because we will share the responsibilities. The younger men said no and yes but it will be difficult for "them": "I feel I can help if they need it." This younger generation appears to have such vastly different perspectives that they seem to be living in a fantasy. As noted, the no answers increased with age for both generations!

IV. SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND IMPLICATIONS

As noted above, several findings stand out as being significant differences between generations and genders: the younger generation of women did not, when growing up, expect to be only a wife and mother, and only a little more than half of that group expected to have both a career and marriage/family. Almost all of the older two generations have not had their expectations of career/marriage/family met, while almost all of the younger generation has. The younger generation plans to have children, while virtually half of the middle generation plans not to have children. The younger generation feels overwhelmingly that their mothers would do it all the same, while the middle generation feels equally strongly that their mothers would not do it the same. It could be said that all three generations of American women expected to "have it all"; the oldest "in spite of" the help they won't get, the youngest "because of" the shared responsibilities they expect from the men.

The biggest differences occur between genders of the youngest generation: the men appear more traditional and overwhelmingly have higher expectations of having children, while the women of the same generation who do plan to have children expect men to share equally in home responsibilities. As noted, reality may be a shock to both these young men and women.

While the advice given to these three generations when growing up remains virtually the same, the source of that advice is vastly different: the two younger generations of women received their advice primarily from their mothers, while the older generation received its advice from primarily their fathers and secondarily from others. Men, on the other hand, reported exactly the opposite advice-giver: the older males reported no advice from their fathers, while almost half of the younger males reported their father as giving them their advice. It seems that role models in the family are changing.

The younger generation reported that they would pass on the same advice that their received, while the two older generations reported wanting to pass on vastly different advice. And, advice being given to boys and girls seems to be becoming more alike.

The younger group of women for obvious reasons reported no career changes or plans for any, while the two older groups reported both. And, in both older female generations, virtually all reported having burned out on either career or marriage or both.

The middle generation of both men and women differ from younger and older. The middle generation of women is the one that reported the highest expectations of having both career and marriage/family, and also the highest reporting not having had those expectations met. That's the generation that reported the highest--overwhelmingly so--number of mothers who would <u>not</u> "do it the same" if given the chance to do it over. That's the group that reported the highest number of women who stated unequivocably that they

have no desire to have children. It's the generation that reported the lowest number who would pass on the same advice that they got, who would advise to put the career first, highest in the number who would advise to be "true to self," and highest to advise not to marry early or at all. This was the generation that reported the lowest "yes" responses to the question of whether it was possible to have it all. It was this generation that responded with statements like

> I think the saying 'To your own self be true' is a timeless statement. If a person wants to 'have it all,' he/she should strive to find and develop their own sense of success, rather than by what they believe is a societal expectation or by someone else's set of values.

It is possible that the difference in this generation could be explained by those mothers: these may be the disillusioned daughters of disenchanted mothers--those for whom the message of women's liberation may have been too late!

It appears evident that the younger generation of both men and women on most issues is the most traditional: more plan to have children, more would pass on the same advice, more expect that it is possible to have it all but with greater reservations. While it was expected that each succeeding generation would become more liberal, as found in Kalish and Johnson's study of daughters, mothers and grandmothers, for ten-year generational differences, this does not appear to hold true. Business Week suggested this might be because "...young women in their 20's...perceive things as being more equal than they are" (p. 128). While part of this may be due to age and inexperience, others suggest that societal attitudes still may not have changed enough: Dubnot concluded that "between 1975 and 1983, male MBA students retained

consistently negative attitudes toward women as managers, while their female counterparts were consistently positive. Furthermore, the men were significantly more negative than the women were positive" (p. 237). Dahl and Hooks suggest it might be the lack of female role models (p. 110). Given the percentage of women in this study in the age group who would be ideal role models for the youngest generation who reported burnout, it is not surprising to find a shortage of role models. For whatever reason, it would appear that something definitely peaked with the middle generation but did not hold its ground with the upcoming generation of women. Or, perhaps it is best summed up by saying that those who have tried it say, no, it's not possible. Those who haven't tried it are still optimistic!

There are some clear implications for future research in the above study. As noted at the outset, no attempt is made to suggest that this is either a random or a representative sampling. It does indicate clear trends, however, and the first suggestion for future study might be to repeat the study with a larger sampling. It would also be useful to expand the age range: what are the expectations of teenagers?

Another area that would be important to study is the apparent trends in advice-giving. This might be an important indicator of changes in family relationships and/or roles within the family: since mothers are now giving most of the advice to young women, does that mean that the status of women in the family is higher? And what does it mean that fathers now give more advice to boys and less to girls? Information about role changes is important to many practitioners: family, school, marriage, etc.

The middle generation's differences piques the interest: Are they as disillusioned and frustrated as they appear to be in the limited sampling of this study? This is the "Viet Nam generation"; is this one of the impacts of that age?

These questions are intriguing, and will surely provide rich ground for future researchers. Knowledge about changing expectations--and thus behaviors--should be valuable in public policy matters such as day care, and to those creating business policy about job-sharing, two-career families, transfer and moving policies, commuting, and other human resource development issues. It should help identify important information for individuals anticipating their own future careers and relationships.

Is it possible to have it all? This study suggests overwhelmingly that the Doonesbury couple may not yet exist: it may still be a fairy tale. Many talked of the "guilt and frustration at trying to do it all...the turning point came for me when I decided to do things differently...and my daughter will do it differently too..." Another woman suggested:

> I might change "having it all" to "doing it all"--maybe more difficult to "have it all" at the same time. People--WOMEN--change through life, grow through life, our needs change. I think we are capable of "doing it all" sometimes in our lives.

Just not all at the same time! And, the last one said, "Go for it. You are worth it!" Again, good advice.

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TABLE ONE

1. When you were growing up, what did you think girls would be doing...

LT26	Mother/	0%	50%	Career	43%	6%	Both	57%	44%
26-35	Wife	7%	22%		22%	0%		71%	78%
36+		29%	50%		6%	0%		65%	40%

10% no response

2. Were your expectations met? (females only)

LT26	Yes 93%	No 7%
26-35	14%	86%
36+±	18%	82%

NOTE: women's responses listed first; men's second.

3. What is your current status about having children?

LT26	Yes 73%	100%	No desire/plans	27%	0%
26-35	45%	94%		55%	6%
36+	50%	80%		50%	20%

4. If your mother had it to do over again, do you feel she would do the same as she did?

LT26	Yes 71%	61%	Yes but	0%	11%	No	29%	28%
26-35	10%	78%		10%	5%		80%	17%
36+	53%	60%		12%	20%		35%	20%

5. The best advice you (or girls) received...

LT26	Own interests first	92%	82%	Marry, kids	8%	22%		
26-35		100%	33%		0%	50%		
36+		93%	40%		7%	50%		

(there were no "no responses" for women; 6%, 17%, and 10% for men)

6. What advice would you <u>give</u> to a young girl...

LT26	Own	100%	83%	Marry	0%	0%	Share	0%	0%	Choose	0%	17%
26-35	inter-	100%	73%	& kids	0%	0%	resp.	0%	0%	sacri-	0%	22%
36+	ests	100%	80%		0%	0%		0%	20%	fice	0%	0%

6a. Advice young boys received... 100% traditional: education, career.

6b. From whom boys and girls received advice...

LT26	Dad	0%	44%	Mom	67%	11%
26-35		0%	40%		86%	11%
36+		40%	0%		20%	10%

7. Describe career change or plans (females only)...

26-35 Virtually all who responded to the question have experienced career change or are actively planning a change (N=5).

36+ 89% plan or have experienced change.

8. Comment re burnout on career or marriage...

26-35 83% said yes to having experienced burnout.

36+ 100% said yes to having experienced burnout either in career or marriage or both.

9. In your opinion, is it possible to "have it all"?

LT26	Yes 69%	61%	Yes but	46%	22%	No	31%	17%
26-35	14%	50%		43%	22%		43%	28%
36+	22%	30%		28%	20%		50%	50%

HAVING IT ALL:
A COMPARISON OF THE EXPECTATIONS ABOUT CAREERS
OF THREE GENERATIONS OF AMERICAN WOMEN

Three generations ago, the women who pioneered in management careers had hopes of "having it all": career, husband, and children in happy balance. This study is examining whether those expectations remain so for the following two generations of women; and, secondly, if those expectations changed over time. Thanks for your help.

PART I: DEMOGRAPHICS

AGE	ANNUAL INCOME	EDUCATIONAL LEVEL	MARITAL STATUS
___ Years	___LT $21,000	___H.S.	___Single
	___$21-30,000	___13-15 yrs	___Divorced
	___$31,50,000	___BA or equiv.	___Married
	___$50,000+	___Grad school	___(Age ")

Did you mother have a career in addition to homemaker when you were growing up?
___Yes ___No If yes, as what?_____

PART II: Please answer the following questions and feel free to make additional comments on the reverse.

1. When you were growing up, what did you think you'd "be" as an adult?
___Mother/wife ___Professional/career person ___Both
(Indicate career_____)

2. What is your current "work role"?
___Homemaker ___Career ___Both
(Indicate career_____)

3. What is your current status about children?
___No. of children ___Plan to have children ___No desire
(ages_____) (when_____) to have kids

4. If your mother had it do over again, do you feel she would do the same as she did?
____Yes ____No
What would she do differently if she could?

5. What is the best advice you received as a young girl about career, children, and marriage?

From whom did you receive that advice?

6. What advice would you give to a young girl about career, children, and marriage?

7. Describe how your career has changed; or, if you are planning a career change, comment on that.

8. Comment about burn-out in marriage, career, or both, such as have you experienced it, or other remarks.

9. In your opinion, is it possible to "have it all?"
____Yes ____No Other:

COMMENTS:

HAVING IT ALL:
A COMPARISON OF THE EXPECTATIONS ABOUT WOMEN & CAREERS
OF THREE GENERATIONS OF AMERICAN MEN

Three generations ago, the women who pioneered in management careers had hopes of "having it all": career, husband, and children in happy balance. This study is examining whether those expectations are the same for the men of those three generations, and whether those expectations changed over time. Thanks for your help.

PART I: DEMOGRAPHICS

AGE	ANNUAL INCOME	EDUCATIONAL	MARITAL STATUS
____years	___LT $21000	___H.S.	___Single
	___$21-30,000	___13-15 years	___Divorced
	___$31-50,000	___BA or equiv.	___Married
		___Grad school	___Age at which married

Did your mother have a career in addition to homemaker when you were growing up?

___Yes ___No If yes, as what?_____

PART II: Please answer the following questions and feel free to make additional comments.

1. When you were growing up, what did you think girls would "be" as an adult?

___Mother/wife ___Professional/career person ___Both

(If you checked career or both, please indicate a career you had thought they might pursue_____
_____)

2. What is your current status about children?

___No. of children (ages_____) ___Plan to have children (when_____) ___No desire to have kids

3. If your mother had it to do over again, do you feel she would do the same as she did?

___Yes ___No

What would she do differently if she could?

4. When you were a young boy, what was the best advice you heard given to a young girl about career, children, and marriage?

From whom did she receive that advice?

5. What advice would you give to a young girl about career, children, and marriage?

6. What is the best advice YOU received as a young boy about career, children, and marriage?

From whom did you receive that advice?

7. What advice would you GIVE to a young boy about career, children, and marriage?

8. Comment on how your expectations may have changed about women's careers, mothering, and/or marriage, as you have observed them over time.

9. In your opinion, is it possible for women to "have it all"?

___Yes ___No Other:

PLEASE USE THE REVERSE FOR OTHER COMMENTS!